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FEMA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
CITY HALL AND COMMUNITY CENTER RELOCATION AND
RECONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
CITY OF PALO, LINN COUNTY, IOWA
FEMA-1763-DR-IA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is working with local, state and other federal agencies to coordinate the response to the Mid-West Storms of 2008, a federally declared disaster in Iowa. Between June 10 and June 15, 2008 floodwaters caused the Cedar River and its tributary, Dry Creek, to overtop their banks. As a result the entire City of Palo was inundated with flood waters. The majority of land within the City of Palo is located within a floodplain.

FEMA was authorized under Presidential Disaster Declaration, FEMA-DR-1763-IA, to provide federal disaster assistance to Linn County, Iowa, as a result of damages during the incident period beginning May 25, 2008 and ending August 13, 2008. (Section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 USC 5121-5206, as amended (Stafford Act, Public Law 93-288)).

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that FEMA evaluate the potential environmental effects of the agency's proposed and alternative actions prior to obligating disaster assistance funds. The President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has developed a series of regulations for implementing the NEPA. These regulations are included in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 1500–1508. The Code of Federal Regulations requires that an Environmental Assessment (EA) include an evaluation of alternative means of addressing damages caused in declared disasters, and a discussion of the potential environmental effects of the proposed Federal Action. An EA provides the evidence and analysis to determine whether a Federal Action will have long-term significant or adverse effects to the human environment and natural resources. An EA prepared by FEMA must be consistent with requirements contained in the Federal Stafford Act and its regulations implementing NEPA at 44 CFR, Part 10. This section of the Federal Code requires that FEMA take environmental considerations into account when authorizing funding or approving actions. This EA was prepared in accordance with both CEQ and FEMA regulations for the NEPA to serve as a vehicle to document compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and to determine whether the potential effects of the Proposed Action will require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

The Proposed Action would require the relocation and reconstruction of a new Palo City Hall/Community Center at the five acre Ralston Parcel, located on the southwest corner of Blair's Ferry Road and Shellsburg Road. The EA contains an evaluation of the potential impacts associated with relocating and reconstructing the City Hall/Community Center at its new location. This includes a discussion of potential impacts to resource topics such as noise, air quality, land use planning, biological resources, cultural resources, floodplain management, hazardous materials, wetlands, in addition to potential effects on minority and low income populations.

CONDITIONS

The Proposed Action would not result in long-term adverse effects either to the human environment or natural resources. The City of Palo (the applicant) will be required to coordinate and/or implement the following conditions:

1. Apply and receive a building permit from the Linn County Zoning Department.
2. Monitor for compliance with the following discovery clause addressing historic and archaeological finds during construction: In the event that archaeological deposits (soils, features, artifacts), or other remnants of human activity are uncovered, or if archaeological deposits are found during project construction, the project would be halted and the applicant would stop all work immediately in the vicinity of the discovery, and take reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. If during the course of construction activities, cultural resources (particularly human remains) are unexpectedly discovered activities would cease in the immediate area and the Iowa State Historic Preservation Officer and the FEMA Regional Environmental Officer are to be notified. Work in sensitive areas would not resume until a qualified archaeologist determines the extent of the discovery and consultations between the Iowa State Historic Preservation Officer and FEMA are complete.

FINDING

FEMA makes the following determinations from the information contained in the EA for the relocation and reconstruction of the City Hall/Community Center: The Proposed Action will not result in any long-term adverse impacts related to air quality, noise, land use, traffic and circulation, floodplain management, public safety, biological and cultural resources, in addition to potential effects on minority or low income groups.

The Proposed Action has been reviewed and to the best of our knowledge, does not have the potential for significant cumulative effects when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in accordance with 44 CFR Part 10.8 (d)(3)(x). As a result of the information and analysis contained in the environmental assessment, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared. An Environmental Impact Statement will not, therefore be prepared based on the fact that there will be no long-term adverse impacts on the natural or human environment as a result of this project.

Kenneth Sessa
Regional Environmental Officer
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region VII